IN SUMMARY

Other Voices
State boards of education should lead the way in encouraging multicultural approaches to curricular reform, a new report urges.
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Playing Favorites?
The U.S. Education Department held its first major conference on history and civics last week, amid charges that the event was slanted in favor of conservatives.
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Responsible Drinking?
A popular nationwide program to discourage drunk driving among students has found critics among some who say it promotes not abstinence, but the responsible use of alcohol. **Page 6.**

Educating Black Children
Despite limited resources, small private schools catering to black children produce students who score above national norms in reading and mathematics, a new study says. **Page 10.**

Budget Woes in Alabama
Alabama's largest school district is making plans to shut its doors in the wake of Gov. Guy Hunt's across-the-board, $145-million cut in the state's education budget.
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Benefactors Wanted
The New American Schools Development Corporation is trying to reignite its stalled efforts to raise up to $200 million to underwrite its program to revamp the nation's schools. **Page 17.**

Working Together
At an unprecedented meeting, U.S. and Mexican educators and government officials last week pledged to work together to solve mutual problems.
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ACROSS THE NATION

STATES

Texas Business Group Pushes For Year-Round School Calendar

A statewide business coalition in Texas this month strongly endorsed a year-round education calendar for the state's schools, but stopped short of recommending a longer school year in terms of actual days spent in the classroom.

The Texas Association of Business proposed that districts throughout the state adopt a calendar with six weeks of classroom instruction followed by two weeks of vacation, with the cycle repeating six times during the year.

An alternative plan proposed by the coalition would be nine weeks of class followed by three weeks of vacation, repeated four times annually.

Such a schedule would retain the traditional 180-day school year, while maximizing the use of existing facilities and minimizing learning loss during the time-honored extended summer break, said Brad Gahm, the group's vice president for governmental affairs.

While stopping short of recommending a longer year, the coalition called on districts to study whether more days in school would lead to additional learning.

The group also avoided the question of how officials would pay for a longer school year, saying that a changed calendar with an unchanged number of school days would lead to minimal, if any, additional costs.

■ **For legal purposes, Nebraska school districts and school boards are the same entity**, the state supreme court has ruled.

The court issued its opinion last month in response to a suit brought by Charles Dennis Zyburo, a guidance counselor who had filed a suit against his former employer, School District 160 (Norris), after he was fired from Norris High School in 1988.

A lower court ruled that Mr. Zyburo had erred when he sought legal action against the school district and not the school board. But the high court, referring to a 1991 state law on the matter, said that a school district and a school board are the same body in the eyes of the law. ■

DISTRICTS

Parents Sue Chicago Schools Over Cut in Services for Disabled

Parents of disabled children in Chicago have gone to court in an effort to force city school officials to restore funds for extended summer programs next year for 10,000 children with serious disabilities.

In a lawsuit filed Oct. 3 in U.S. District Court in Chicago, the parents contend that school officials violated federal and state special-education laws by eliminating the summer programs.

The parents said that their children need the extra help during the summer in order to prevent them from losing the educational progress they have made.

"I am scared," one mother of an educably mentally handicapped teenage boy, said, that "my son will have to start all over again" in September.

The elimination of the $8.5 million that had been set aside for the summer programs was among a number of belt-tightening measures school officials took in order to balance the school system's $2-billion-plus budget. The district has also laid off teachers and closed schools.

A spokesman for Designs for Change, the reform-advocacy group representing the parents, said the cuts this year were part of "a pattern of repeated failure" to provide appropriate summer programs for seriously disabled students.

Utah District Sued for Filing Brief in U.S. Supreme Court Case

A Utah school district that has been sued for allowing student prayers at high-school graduations is facing a new lawsuit, this time for filing a friend-of-the-court brief in a separate case on graduation prayer to be considered this term by the U.S. Supreme Court

The new suit against the Alpine school district contends that it violated the Utah Constitution by expending public funds to file a brief in support of graduation prayer in *Lee* v. *Weisman*, a case from Rhode Island that the High Court will hear in November.

The Alpine district was sued in federal court last year by the Utah chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union over its practice of allowing students to recite prayers at graduation ceremonies.

The federal judge in the case has indicated that he intends to wait until the Supreme Court rules in the Rhode Island case before deciding the challenge to the Alpine district.

In the new suit, filed recently in state district court in Provo, Brian Barnard, a local lawyer, argues that district's decision to file a brief in the Supreme Court case violated the state constitution's ban against the spending of public money for "any religious worship, exercise, or instruction."

A spokesman for the Alpine district said officials filed the brief in the Rhode Island case as part of its legal strategy to defend itself against the lawsuit it faces from the A.C.L.U.

■ **A high-school biology teacher has sued the Capistrano Unified School District in California for $5 million, charging that a district policy that requires him to teach evolution violates his constitutional rights.**

In a lengthy brief filed this month in federal court, John Peloza, a teacher at Capistrano Valley High School in Mission Viejo, argues that the district discriminated against him by forcing him to abandon his teaching of creationist theories.

In a news conference outside the federal building in Santa Ana, Calif., recently, Mr. Peloza said he believes that the difference between evolution and creationism—the biblically based belief that God created the world from nothing in a matter of days—are simply "differences in philosophies."

The Capistrano district's curriculum guidelines, according to a spokesman, require the teaching of evolution as a "valid scientific theory" and conform to the state's science-curriculum framework.

■ **The Missouri Court of Appeals has ruled that it cannot resolve a long-running open-meetings dispute between the Kansas City school district and the Kansas City Star Company**, which publishes *The Kansas City Star* newspaper.

Citing the lack of a "concrete factual situation" on which to make a determination, the appellate court on Oct. 1 sent the case back to Jackson County Circuit Judge Preston Dean, said William J. Dittmeier, the district's legal counsel.

Pint-Sized Proposers

Students at a Maryland elementary school, perhaps wise in the way of pop quizzes, recently turned tables on their teacher to help her suitor pop the "big question."

Knowing how much his girlfriend, Becky Klein, loved teaching her 6th graders at Summit Hall Elementary School in Gaithersburg, Craig Nelson, the owner of a hardware business, figured out a rather engaging way to include them in the courtship.

Loel Barr

First, he arranged for Ms. Klein to be lured out of the classroom for a meeting with the principal. Upon her return, she saw her 24 homeroom students lined up against a wall, each holding up a piece of paper with a letter on it. Taken together, the letters spelled out the question, "Becky, will you marry Craig?"

While students giggled and a friend videotaped the romantic moment, the anxious suitor waited approximately eight seconds on bended knee before a stunned Ms. Klein could say "yes."

Mr. Nelson had nothing but praise for his junior matchmakers.

"I tried to keep the message a secret," he said. "One girl figured it out, but no one let it slip."

Ms. Klein recalls being astonished by the spectacle. "When I first walked into the room, I thought, 'How can I get him out of here gracefully?' " she said.

Students seemed as excited as the happy couple themselves. Some re-enacted the scene; others gave Mr. Nelson a hearty slap on the back, saying he would be marrying "the sweetest girl."

"One boy even cried; it was that emotional," remarked a still-amazed Ms. Klein.

—S.K.G.

Judge Dean ruled last year that the school district was a public governmental body that could not keep its administration records hidden. However, Mr. Dittmeier said last week that the appeals-court ruling would "negate any previous decision by Judge Dean."

"We're back to where we started," Mr. Dittmeier said, adding that the district has not yet decided whether to further appeal the case.

The case goes back several years and centers on disputes between the district and the newspaper over which of the district's documents and meetings the newspaper has access to under Missouri's "sunshine law," Mr. Dittmeier said.

■ **The San Francisco school board has approved a plan to begin the distribution of condoms to students in two high schools by the end of the school year.**

Under the new policy, which was adopted last week, latex condoms will be distributed in a high-school based health clinic by the end of the fall semester, and would be distributed in a school without a clinic starting this spring.

The district will use outside contributions to fund the program.

Under the policy, parents will have the right to exclude their children from participation in the program.

The condom-distribution policy was part of a comprehensive health and sex-education program adopted by the board.

Both pilot projects will be evaluated before the district decides whether to expand the program to other schools, said Beverly Bradley, the district's supervisor of health programs.

■ **The Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners has proposed allowing competition among public schools within the district.**

The proposal, one of several education initiatives proposed by the board this month, may never be implemented, however, because the district is under federal court order to bus students to achieve racial balance.

U.S. District Judge S. Hugh Dillin, who is overseeing the district's desegregation order, in the past has refused to amend his order, which involves the busing of thousands of students.

Other initiatives proposed by the board this month call for more site-based management and the establishment of new middle schools and precise new school standards.

Mary E. Bush, the school-board's president, said that some of the proposed reforms, would begin with the 1992-93 school year, would require the approval of the state legislature. ■

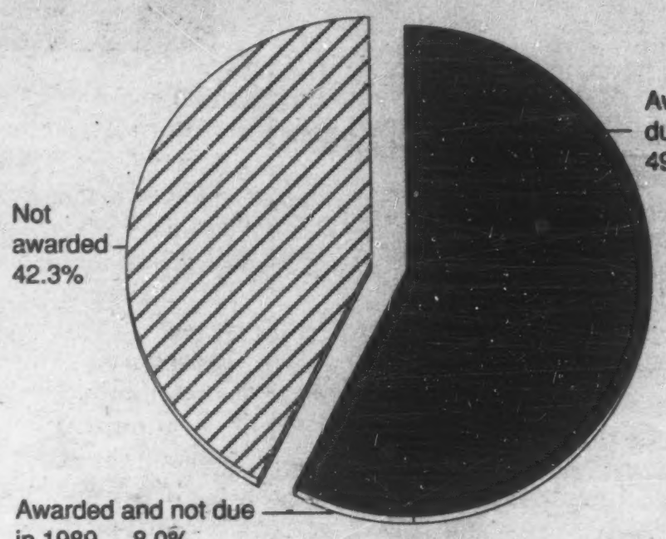
DIMENSIONS

Child-Support Payments

As of 1990, 5.7 million women had been awarded child-support payments by the courts, but only about half of them had received the full amount due, according to data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The rest were about evenly divided between those who had received partial payment and those whose who had received nothing, the bureau reported.

Award of Child-Support Payments *



* Based on a total of 10 million women with children from absent fathers
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In spring of 1990, when the survey was conducted, some 10 million women were raising a total of 16 million children under age 21 without a father present. Of these women, 58 percent, or 5.7 million, had been awarded child-support payments.

The number of women raising children without a father present increased 39 percent from 1979 to 1990, the bureau said.

The average annual child-support payment received by all women who received payments was $2,995 in 1989, the bureau reported as part of the same study. Divorced or separated women received far more than women who had never married. Similarly, white women received 38 percent higher payments, on average, than black women; women with four or more years of college got about 67 percent more than less-educated women; and poor women, who relied on payments for a greater share of their income than did more affluent women, received 57.2 percent of the payment received by their nonpoor peers.

Copies of the report, "Child Support and Alimony: 1989," are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402; telephone (202) 783-3238.

UPDATE

■ **The Richmond (Calif.) Unified School District is being allowed to withdraw voluntarily from bankruptcy protection.**

A federal bankruptcy-court judge this month accepted a motion by the district to withdraw from the bankruptcy process it entered last year.

The district intends to continue negotiations with creditors and to develop a recovery plan that will be submitted to county and state officials for approval, said Fred Stewart, an administrator for the district's finances appointed by Bill Honig, state superintendent of public instruction.

The Bay Area district had filed for bankruptcy and threatened to close schools last spring for lack of money, but a superior-court judge ordered the state to lend the district the money it needed to maintain operations. *(See Education Week, May 1, 1991.)*

■ **Three school workers who helped rescue children following the fatal collision of a helicopter and a plane carrying U.S. Senator John Heinz last April have sued the aircraft operators.**

A two-engine plane owned by Lycoming Air Services carrying Mr. Heinz and others collided with a helicopter owned by the Sun Company, an oil-refining firm, in midair on April 4, showering the school playground and building with flaming debris. *(See Education Week, April 10, 1991.)*

Seven people, including Mr. Heinz and two 1st graders playing in the schoolyard of Merion Elementary School, were killed in the incident.

The National Transportation Safety Board ruled that both crews showed poor judgment.

John Fowler, a custodian, Ivinetta Weeks, a reading specialist, and Tho Oldham, a playground monitor, filed suit in Montgomery County Court against the Sun Company Inc., Sun Refining & Marketing Company, and Lycoming Air Services Inc., all Pennsylvania firms.

Mr. Fowler and Ms. Weeks were credited with saving the life of David Rutenberg, a 2nd grader who was severely burned in the incident. Ms. Oldham led many children to safety after the crash.

■ **The Rhode Island Supreme Court has delayed a lower-court order allowing a 17-year-old boy to play on his high school's all-girls field-hockey team.**

Superior Court Judge Mark A. Preiffer ruled earlier this month that a regulation of the Rhode Island Interscholastic League barring boys from playing on all-girls teams is unconstitutional. *(See Education Week, Oct. 9, 1991.)*

The athletic association appealed that ruling to the state's high court, which agreed to hear the case.

The decision means that Brian Kleczek, a junior who is the team's equipment manager, probably will not play with the team this season.

No date has been set for arguments before the state supreme court.

■ **A Minnesota district's superintendent has been acquitted on charges that he failed to report the sexual abuse of a student by a teacher.**

Judge Harold Krieger acquitted Kenneth Doty, superintendent of the West Concord district, this month after a county prosecutor failed to present witnesses who would testify that Mr. Doty knew about a sexual relationship that existed between a female teacher and one of her female students.

Mr. Doty, along with the principal of West Concord High School, had been charged under a 1983 state law that requires educators to contact law-enforcement authorities if they "know or have reason to believe" that child abuse has occurred. *(See Education Week, April 25, 1990.)*

The principal, Raymond Six, whose testimony helped lead to Mr. Doty's acquittal, still faces his charge. The teacher involved was convicted and sentenced to jail last year.

■ **A federal appeals court has ruled that the nation's regional telephone companies may begin offering information services to their customers immediately,** opening the door to the development of a host of new services from electronic "Yellow Pages" to computerized databases.

The appeals-court decision, issued last week, follows a ruling this summer by U.S. District Judge Harold Greene that the telephone companies could begin owning information-service subsidiaries within a year. *(See Education Week, Sept. 4, 1991.)*

Judge Greene had sought to give opponents of the ruling, including the newspaper industry, time to appeal his decision.

The so-called "baby Bells" have lobbied since they were created by the breakup of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company in 1984 to provide information services at a low cost through their existing networks.

But spokesmen for the companies, which last week were scrambling to decide which new services to offer, noted that most will not have any new products available for at least a year.

While the companies recently have begun wooing schools with improved and innovative services, schools will not be an immediate priority in developing new products, they acknowledged. ■

PEOPLE

■ **W.W. Herenton,** superintendent of the Memphis public schools from 1979 until June of this year, has become the city's first elected black mayor.

Mr. Herenton, 51, defeated Richard Hackett, a two-term incumbent, by 172 votes.

Memphis City Schools

W.W. Herenton

Even though neither candidate won 50 percent of the vote, Mr. Herenton's election will stand. A federal judge ruled this year that the runoff procedure used in citywide elections in the past had discriminated against black candidates. ■

Correction

A table that accompanied a story in the Oct. 9, 1991, edition about a survey on the quality of precollegiate education incorrectly reported the responses of postsecondary educators. The correct survey results are as follows:

Caliber of High-School Graduates 5 and 10 Years Ago

		Post-secondary Educators
Compared to 5 Years Ago	Better prepared	36
	Worse prepared	43
	The same	19
	Not sure/Refused	2
Compared to 10 Years Ago	Better prepared	34
	Worse prepared	52
	The same	7
	Not sure/Refused	6

Source: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

Photos by Photopress

At a Students Against Driving Drunk meeting at Towson (Md.) High School, chapter members prepare for an upcoming fund-raiser. The group, although extremely popular in schools around the country, has been criticized for subtly promoting the "responsible use" of alcohol. Since 1986, when the Congress adopted the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, all programs funded by the U.S. Education Department must espouse a clear "no use" message.

monstrate graphically the effects of drunken driving. The chapter also sponsors drug- and alcohol-free events, and hosts assemblies featuring special speakers.

Probably the most well-known, and controversial, element of SADD is its "Contract for Life," which both the teenager and parent sign. In its original incarnation, the adolescent pledged to call home at any time, or at any place, if he was intoxicated or with a drunken driver. The parent, in turn, agreed to pick up the child, no questions asked. The contract states that the incident could be discussed at a later time.

Since SADD's founding, however, the political climate and popular theories about drug-abuse prevention have changed. Since 1986, when the Congress adopted the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, all programs funded by the U.S. Education Department must espouse a clear "no use" message.

In a no-use program, students are told that any use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol by minors is wrong and harmful. Responsible-use programs, by contrast, while not condoning drug use, stress informed decisionmaking, or attempt to limit the riskiest forms of behavior, such as drinking and driving.

A U.S. General Accounting Office study, released last month, charges that the department unnecessarily limits its drug-free schools program by only considering schools with a strict no-use approach.

The problem, the study states, is that research has not shown "the general superiority of one prevention approach over any other, nor have any evaluations isolated the effects of a no-use approach." *(See Education Week, Oct. 2, 1991.)*

A 'Mixed' Message

Over the past decade, SADD's policies have changed to more clearly reflect a no-use message, contends William Cullinane, the acting executive director of the Marlboro, Mass.-based group.

"The goal initially was to prevent young people from dying," he says. "Once young people proved they could do that, we've moved along to the point that we ask students to accept a no-use lifestyle."

The Contract for Life, he notes, has undergone several changes, the most recent of which includes a note in boldface at the top that states that the signers "understand that SADD requires all youths to adopt a no-use policy."

Language that would indicate that the teenaged signer had himself been drinking was dropped in the early 80's, Mr. Cullinane says. Instead, the adolescent pledges to call for a ride "if I am ever faced with a situation where a driver has been drinking or using illicit drugs."

Despite these modifications, some educators are reluctant to embrace SADD.

Officials from the Education Department, for example, say the activities and philosophy of each SADD chapter, like those of any other anti-drug activity, must be individually examined before a chapter can qualify for federal drug-education money, which is passed through the states, or be eligible for the department's drug-free-schools recognition program.

"Nobody can make a blanket statement about the SADD program," says William Modzeleski, director of the department's drug-abuse-prevention oversight staff, noting that individual chapters may have policies that do not meet federal standards. "We've been working with SADD for a long time, looking at how it can be strengthened."

James Better, the department's staff director for the recognition program, says there are still concerns about the latest contract. A 1989 letter from the department to SADD officials, which Mr. Better says still represents the department's views, notes that, while "SADD does not expressly condone illegal drinking by students, we believe that the implicit message that the 'Contract for Life' sends is mixed."

Officials in some states also express skepticism about the program.

"Basically, it really conflicts with the drug-free-schools philosophy," says Danny Trujillo, the drug-free-schools and communities coordinator for the New Mexico Department of Education and the former SADD state director.

'The Awareness Is There'

Mr. Trujillo says SADD—which he believes espouses a "responsible use" policy—is being phased out of the state, and is being replaced by programs that emphasize peer-counseling and peer-helping.

"SADD was good for its time, but since then, it has not kept up with the research [emphasizing prevention]," he says.

"We don't feel it extends the purpose of the [drug-free-schools] program, which is essentially no use," says Betty Lohraff, the director of instructional improvement and resources for the Missouri Department of Education. Schools that want to use their federal money to fund SADD activities must explain how the chapter complies with the program's rules, she says.

But schools that have SADD chapters say the groups have made a noticeable difference in students' attitudes about alcohol use.

"I have heard kids say, 'You have been drinking and you drove? You're crazy!' " says Rachel Lopez Arnold, an English teacher and the SADD adviser at Deer Valley High School in Glendale, Ariz. "[Kids] have taken keys, they've taken air out of tires to prevent their friends from driving."

"The vast majority of kids are aware of not drinking and driving," she adds. "I know there are parties all the time, and kids are drinking—but at least the awareness is there."

Tamra Reszler, vice president of the SADD chapter at Aberdeen Central High School in South Dakota, says she believes the group has persuaded students to adopt alcohol-free lifestyles.

"I think it adds a little bit more pressure for a kid to go up to a kid and say, 'I don't think you should be drinking,' " she says. ■

We heard about the school problems during the work of the commission, and we invited some principals to come and speak with us. They did, and it is a fact that there are intrusions [from athletics] into the scholastic programs, and the thoughtful people that are involved are taking steps to correct them.

Q. The N.C.A.A. will consider amendments in January to its regulations that will tighten eligibility requirements. How will they affect college athletics?

Q. What's being proposed by the Presidents' Commission is almost a direct reference to what happened in the Knight studies, and they are these: that we reexamine the admissions requirements so that athletes are treated like everybody else; that the evaluation of academic progress would occur term by term, and not once a year; that [athletes] enroll in a credible degree program, and not something patched together; and that there be a graduation rate over a five-year span that is comparable to other students.

Q. There is another movement to repeal reforms made last January.

A. I regret this, but at our meeting, the Knight Commission members decided unanimously through Father Hesburgh and me to advise the Council of Presidents that we will stand with them in every way and specifically to oppose every one of these movements because they do weaken, if not completely abolish, actions that were heretofore taken.

Q. What recommendations do you have for high-school counselors?

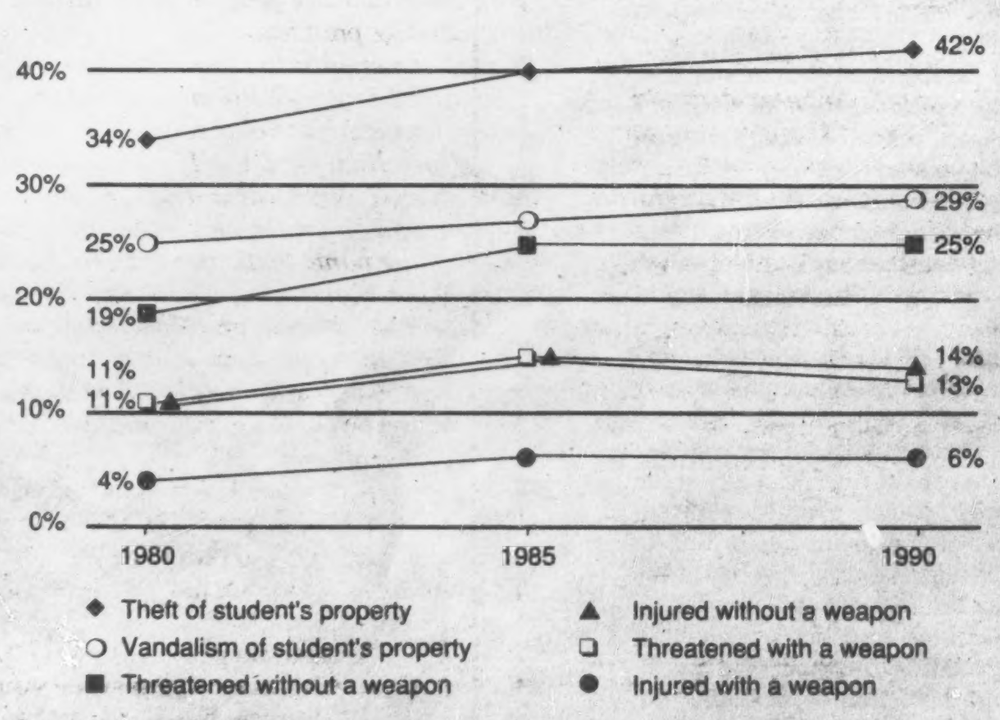
A. I would hope that they would find some way of getting in touch with athletics directors at colleges and universities. . . . It's very important, because one thing the Knight Commission learned is that one in every 100 young people who participate in college athletics ever makes it to the pros, in the sense of making a living from sport. That says that 99 others have to have another way of being gainfully employed, meaning that the burden is on the institution to make sure that their experience is a sustaining experience.

This is why it's so important for the counselor and high-school adviser to know what is required and see to it that the students are prepared, because it is a very devastating experience for a young person to flunk out of school or be declared ineligible or for whatever reason to not have been prepared. ■

DIMENSIONS

Student Victimization Trends

Percent of 12th graders who reported being victimized in school during the previous year



Source: University of Michigan